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1 — Arkema documents show planning, mechanical failures led to chemical fires during Harvey, Houston Chronicle, 11/15/17

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Arkema-documents-show-planning-mechanical-12358188.php>

Prior to the chemical fire at its Crosby plant, Arkema underestimated the potential for storm damage and failed to keep essential backup power protected from rising floodwaters, documents obtained by the Houston Chronicle show.

2 — How safe is seafood caught near the San Jacinto Waste Pits? County officials plan to find out, Houston Chronicle, 11/15/17

<http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/crab-and-fish-12357170.php>

High levels of cancer-causing dioxin found near the San Jacinto Waste Pits in the wake of Hurricane Harvey have Harris County officials concerned about the safety of seafood caught in the area. So on Tuesday, the County Commissioners Court approved an agreement for testing in a 5-mile radius of the Superfund site.

3 — EPA auditing Houston's use of water infrastructure project fund, Houston Chronicle, 11/15/17

<http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Audit-12356051.php>

The city of Houston now is being audited by the EPA for its use of dollars and contracting practices related to a loan program that helps fund water infrastructure projects. It is not clear, however, what prompted the audit or what is being examined: Federal officials would not elaborate and city officials could not be reached for comment.

4 — 'This Is an Emergency': 1 Million African Americans Live Near Oil, Gas Facilities, Inside Climate News, 11/14/17

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/14112017/african-americans-exposed-oil-gas-wells-refineries-health-risks-naacp-study>

A new analysis concludes what many in African-American communities have long experienced: Low-income, black Americans are disproportionately exposed to toxic air pollution from the fossil fuel industry.

5 — For Some Native Americans, Uranium Contamination Feels Like Discrimination, NPR, 11/14/17

<http://nhpr.org/post/some-native-americans-uranium-contamination-feels-discrimination#stream/0>

Helen Nez had 10 children. Now she only has three. Seven of her children died of a disorder called Navajo neuropathy, which is linked to uranium contamination.

6 — Newkirk citizens plan meeting to oppose biochemical testing nearby, KFOR, 11/14/17

<http://kfor.com/2017/11/14/newkirk-citizens-plan-meeting-to-oppose-biochemical-testing-nearby/>

Concerns over chemical testing have a community banding together in opposition. Meetings planned are just part of the protest against the upcoming testing at the Chilocco Indian School.

7 — Louisiana's Share Of The Exxon Settlement, WRKF, 11/14/17

<http://wrkf.org/post/louisianas-share-exxon-settlement>

The public comment period on the EPA settlement with Exxon is now open. The agreement involves reducing air pollutants at eight Exxon facilities — five in Texas and three in Baton Rouge.

8 — Marsh loss turning native Louisiana ducks into common mallards, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 11/14/17
http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/11/marsh_loss_turning_native_la_d.html#incart_river_index

As its breeding grounds disappear along the Louisiana coast, the mottled duck -- the only duck native to the marshes of the American South -- is finding mates farther inland, in urban drainage and park ponds, ditches and farm fields. Problem is, that's increasingly the territory of the mallard, the most common and widespread duck in the world.

9 — Residents worry trees could fall victim to bayou flood control efforts, Houston Chronicle, 11/14/17
<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/politics/houston/article/Residents-worry-trees-could-fall-victim-to-bayou-12357550.php>

A Harris County study to reduce flooding along Buffalo Bayou between Texas 6 and Beltway 8 is drawing fire from local groups who say flood control improvements could destroy forests there.



Arkema documents show planning, mechanical failures led to chemical fires during Harvey

By **Matt Dempsey and Jacob Carpenter** | November 15, 2017 | Updated: November 15, 2017 7:35am



Photo: EPA Document

IMAGE 1 OF 10

Arkema's Hurricane Harvey ride out crew take one last look of the flooded facility as they evacuate the Crosby site on Aug. 29, 2017.

Prior to the chemical fire at its Crosby plant, Arkema underestimated the potential for storm damage and failed to keep essential backup power protected from rising floodwaters, documents obtained by the Houston Chronicle show.

Poor planning and a series of cascading equipment failures led to dangerous chemicals erupting into flames in late August during the height of Hurricane Harvey. The miscalculations indicate the company's lack of preparation for more than 3 feet of flooding, reflected by an emergency management plan that barely addressed how to handle such a storm.

Those judgments led to the burning of nine trailers containing the company's stockpile of organic peroxides. The resulting inferno exposed first responders and local residents to dangerous fumes

and pulled emergency staffers away from hurricane recovery at a critical time.

Arkema officials argue that unprecedented floods made it impossible to prevent its chemicals from catching fire. The site had only seen up to 2 feet of flooding in the past, company officials said.

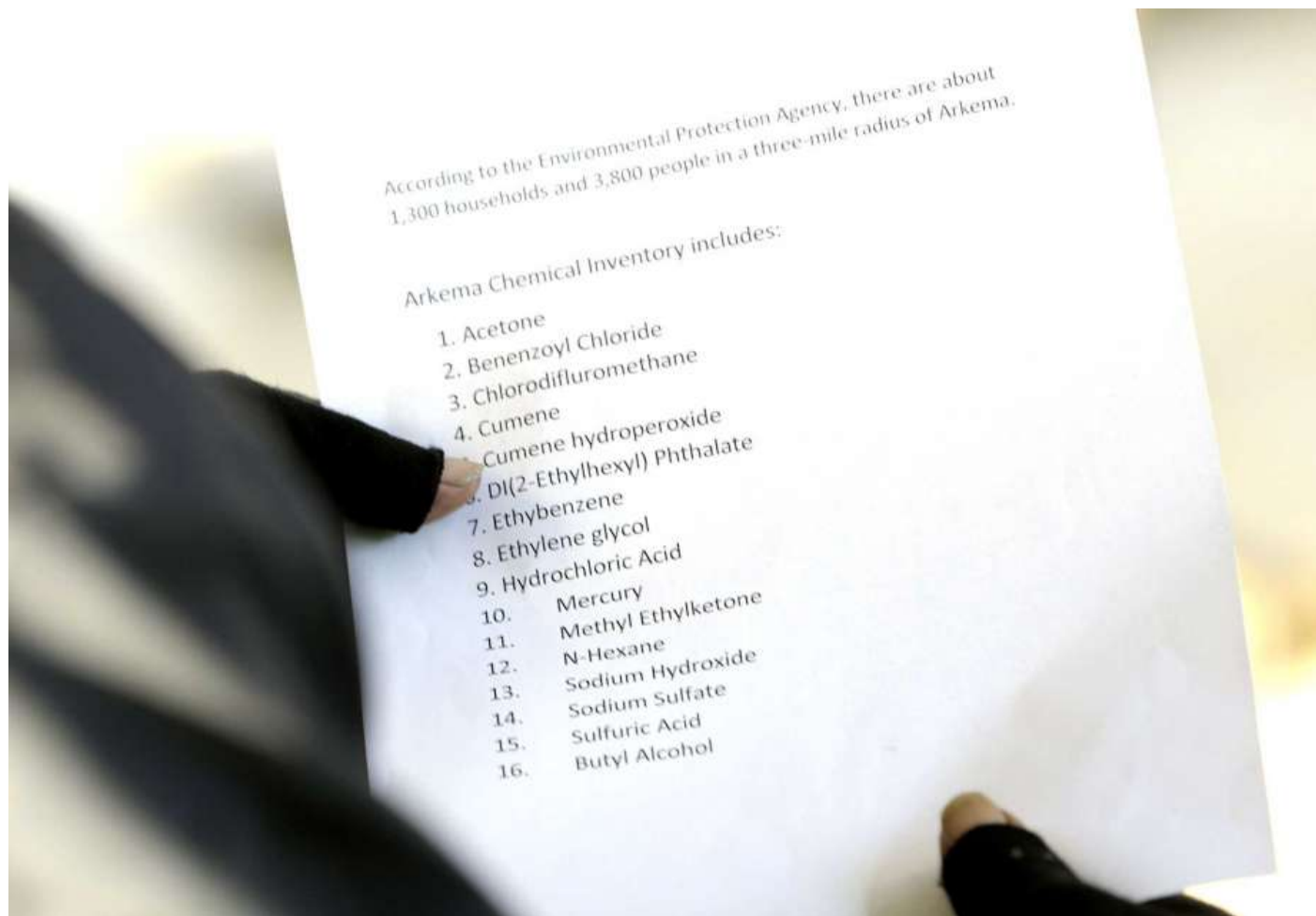


Photo: Elizabeth Conley, Houston Chronicle

A list of chemicals at the Arkema plant was passed around to people who live near the chemical plant on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2017, in Crosby.

The Chronicle obtained Arkema's internal records from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and conducted interviews with government employees with knowledge of ongoing investigations of the events at the plant. The emerging picture reveals nine days of chaos, culminating with the decision to intentionally burn chemicals that posed a danger to the public.

The records, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, and interviews show that:

* Arkema's emergency response plan provided employees with little direction for how to handle major flooding events. It contained one paragraph about flooding but a page and a half on handling bomb threats, records show.

* Arkema's main power transformers and its powerful backup generators were not high enough off the ground, causing them to become submerged with floodwaters, Arkema records show. Without power, the company could not keep its stash of organic peroxides at a safe temperature inside its refrigerated buildings.

* The company's last resort for keeping organic peroxides cool - refrigerated trailers - also was destined to fail. The diesel-powered trailers had fuel tanks that ran along the bottom of the vehicle. More than 3 feet of water compromised the fuel tanks, causing the freezers to die.

* Arkema had a tank of an extremely dangerous chemical, isobutylene, located about 40 yards from six trailers that had been relocated during the storm, according to interviews and satellite images. Government officials were concerned about a chain reaction with that chemical that could have led to catastrophic results.

Arkema officials said again Tuesday that no amount of planning could have protected its site from the storm.

"Many of your conclusions fail to recognize that Hurricane Harvey was unlike any rain event Houston ever experienced," company spokeswoman Janet Smith said in an email.

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Arkema plant faces criminal investigation

TRANSLATOR

To read this article in one of Houston's most-spoken languages, click on the

"FEMA's 500-year flood map doesn't address the situation that occurred during Hurricane Harvey."

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Four days after Harvey made landfall in Texas, the Arkema plant was under 7 feet of water. The last employees to evacuate the site left by boat, floating over a 6-foot chain-link fence topped by barbed wire, the records show.

"Flooding in Houston is a perfectly foreseeable event," said Paul Orum, an independent Washington, D.C., consultant and longtime chemical safety advocate. "Facilities should be prepared when it comes to several different layers of flooding."

Lines laid low

Arkema, a French multinational company, manufactures chemicals used to create plastic products. Many of its proprietary compounds are classified as organic peroxides, which must be kept at temperatures well below freezing to prevent the chemicals from catching fire.

With Hurricane Harvey bearing down on Southeast Texas and the National Hurricane Center warning of potentially "catastrophic" or "life-threatening" flooding, the company's plans for protecting its product were simple: keep the chemicals cold on-site.

The company had multiple freezer buildings, six backup generators, and, as a last resort, refrigerated trucks. Documents provided to the Chronicle did not indicate any plans to drive the organic peroxides away from Harvey's impact.

But Arkema's plan for Harvey was based on one flawed assumption: that the site would never experience floods higher than 3 feet. By the end of the weekend, the rain had exceeded that total.

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

On the afternoon of Aug. 27, two days after the storm made landfall, Arkema employees riding out the storm became concerned that floodwaters would seep into the primary power transformers, according to the crew's logs. If that happened, the plan was to start the backup generators; one of them was connected to refrigerated buildings keeping the organic peroxides cold.

At the same time, employees were already aware that a backup liquid nitrogen system was useless after floodwaters reached the pipes that would pump freezing nitrogen into buildings.

Within 24 hours, the primary transformers and two generators powering the refrigerated buildings were inundated with floodwaters, records show.

In planning for catastrophic flooding, Arkema could have elevated its backup generators on platforms or placed them on roofs, said Rick Laine, a salesman for Cay Power Products Co. of Houston. Laine noted that it's rare, but not impossible, for generators to be placed on platforms several feet above the ground.

"We sometimes see them elevated that high in Galveston with the storm surge, but not in a place that's way out there like Crosby," Laine said.

By the night of Aug. 27, the 12 employees riding out the storm at Arkema were in a precarious position. Only one freezer building still had power. Their land lines were out. The internet was out. Water was about a foot away from the main transformers. They had already moved some of the peroxides into freezer trucks and used heavy equipment to relocate the trailers farther from the workers.

"This effort of our ride out crew has been nothing short of heroic," the crew's log reads.

But the crew's circumstances were only going to get worse.

A toxic cloud?

With the liquid nitrogen system down and backup generators inundated, the team spent most of Aug. 28 wading through floodwaters to move the remaining peroxides into refrigerated trailers, the documents show.

It was the last line of defense – and one that was already failing.

As employees stuffed 48 pallets of organic peroxides into a trailer, two other freezer trailers died, crew logs show. Arkema told employees to move to the front of the site so they wouldn't be near the trailers if they caught fire, according to a family member of one of the workers.

The next day, Aug. 29, the workers were ordered to evacuate. Local government officials ordered everyone within 1.5 miles of the plant to leave, affecting about 300 homes. During the next two days, three refrigerated trailers lost the ability to cool the chemicals, causing the first fires that burned over Crosby.

The first fire started in the middle of the night of Aug. 31. Fumes from one trailer swept over the evacuation zone, where sheriff's deputies were patrolling. Law enforcement officers manning the perimeter and medical staff responding to the scene doubled over, vomiting and gasping for breath, according to a civil lawsuit filed against Arkema by the first responders. In all, 23 people were briefly hospitalized.

"The scene was nothing less than chaos," the lawsuit states.

Two more trailers caught fire on Sept. 1. Two days later, members of the Houston Police Department's bomb squad entered the site and placed charges on the side of the remaining six trailers. Officers remotely detonated the charges, creating enough heat to trigger the runaway reactions and burn out the remaining chemicals.



Photo: Elizabeth Conley, Houston Chronicle

A tank at the Arkema plant on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2017, in Crosby.

No public warning

It's not clear whether Houston police offered to do the mission or were asked to participate by other agencies overseeing the crisis.

The entire police operation was conducted without warning the public. Until the documents were released earlier this month by the EPA, the public didn't know who performed the controlled burn, or how it was done.

Ultimately, the bomb squad was successful. The evacuation zone was lifted that evening. First responders returned to helping with Harvey recovery and Crosby residents returned to their homes.

Throughout the blazes, Arkema and local officials said the fumes were not toxic. And Arkema downplayed the odds of other chemicals being affected by the flames.

Some government officials worried that a tank containing isobutylene, an extremely hazardous chemical, could fail when the organic peroxides burned, according to a source close to the investigation. An isobutylene tank failure could have triggered a chain reaction, taking out the company's sulfur dioxide tank and creating a toxic cloud. Arkema's risk-management plan said such a reaction could affect more than a million Houston-area residents.

The concern was so great that the bomb squad set fire to the remaining trailers farthest from the isobutylene first, just to be sure. The tank was not damaged and did not catch fire.

Multiple investigations continue into the Arkema fires. On Wednesday, the U.S. Chemical Safety Board will discuss its progress during a news conference.

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How safe is seafood caught near the San Jacinto Waste Pits? County officials plan to find out

By **Alex Stuckey** Updated 5:51 pm, Tuesday, November 14, 2017

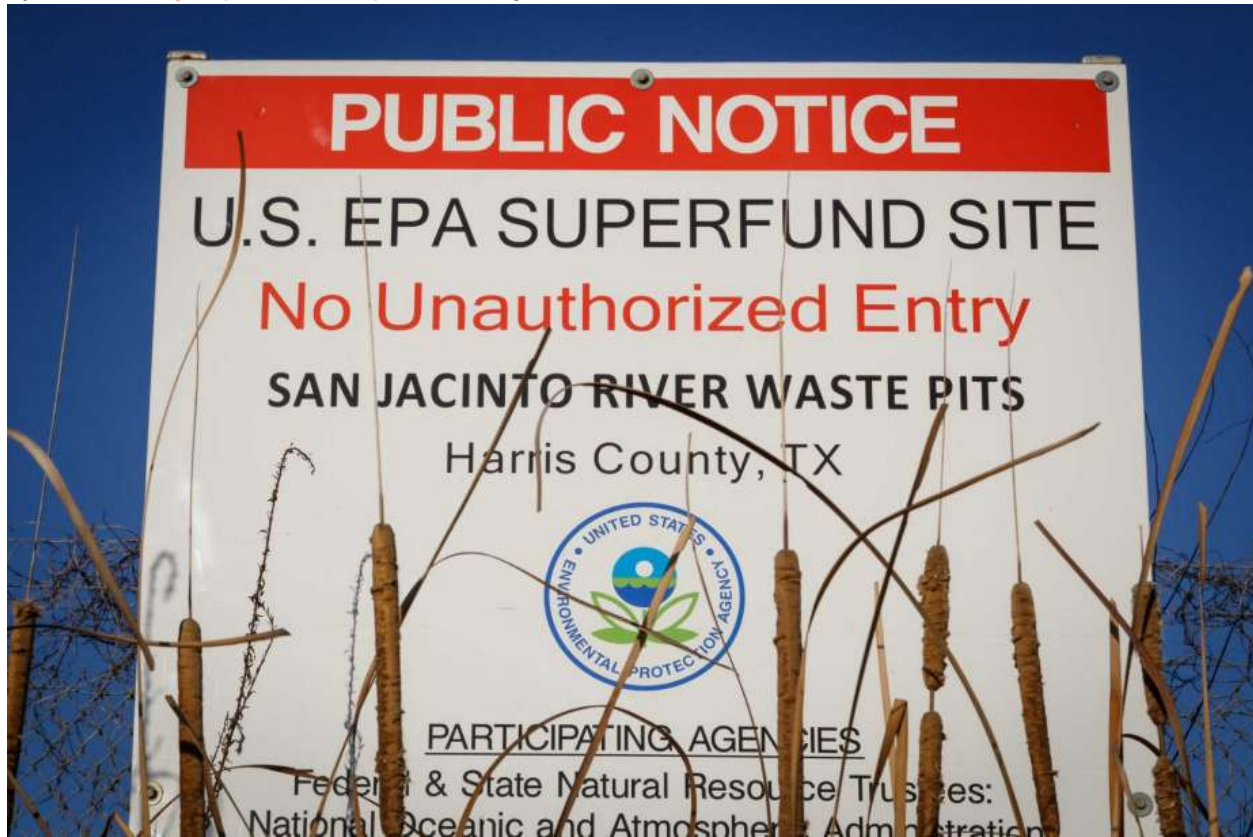


IMAGE 1 OF 13

A sign warns the public about the EPA Superfund Site not to eat contaminated seafood caught from the water along I-10 near the San Jacinto River east of Houston, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013, in Channelview. Texans ... [more](#)

High levels of cancer-causing dioxin found near the San Jacinto Waste Pits in the wake of Hurricane Harvey have Harris County officials concerned about the safety of seafood caught in the area.

So on Tuesday, the County Commissioners Court approved an agreement for testing in a 5-mile radius of the Superfund site.

"Everything has changed since Harvey," said David Walden, chief of staff for County Commissioner Jack Morman. "The caps failed at the waste pits, they're leaking dioxin ... It's probably a good time to start testing things."

San Jacinto Waste pits after Hurr...

Hundreds of families in r... nei...



In September, the Environmental Protection Agency confirmed that a concrete cap used to cover the . Agency officials found dioxin in : EPA standard for clean-up.



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from the waste pits.

manently remove tons of toxics

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That process, however, will take years. In the meantime, county officials believe residents should know what they're consuming.

"People need to know what exactly they're catching, how much they can consume and what's dangerous and what isn't," Walden said.

The testing, expected to cost \$250,000, will be funded with money from a settlement agreement over the river's waste pits, which decades ago were used by industrial paper mills to dispose of waste, including highly toxic dioxins.

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The Galveston Bay Foundation is charged with finding a contractor to conduct the testing, which will consist of collecting and analyzing sediment samples and 20-40 fish and crab

tissue samples in a 5-mile radius of the pits, in the San Jacinto River and the Houston Ship Channel.

"The last large, comprehensive round of fish and crab tissue sampling from the San Jacinto River and Houston Ship Channel was completed by [the Department of State Health Services] in July 2011," according to the foundation's testing proposal.

Additional testing in 2012 only tested for dioxin in four locations and none were taken in the San Jacinto River in the vicinity of the pits, the proposal adds.

Scott Jones, the foundation's director of advocacy, said they already are looking for contractors and expect the testing to be completed within a year.

The idea, Jones said, is to look at whether dioxin levels in the fish and crab are high enough to be a safety concern and whether the waste pits are the main source.

Alex Stuckey covers science and the environment for the Houston Chronicle. You can reach her at alex.stuckey@chron.com or [Twitter.com/alexdstuckey](https://twitter.com/alexdstuckey).

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EPA auditing Houston's use of water infrastructure project fund

By **Alex Stuckey** Updated 5:12 pm, Tuesday, November 14, 2017



Floodwaters from the Addicks Reservoir inundate a water treatment plant off N. Eldridge Parkway in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Harvey on Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017, in Houston. (Brett Coomer / Houston Chronicle)

The city of Houston now is being audited by the EPA for it's use of dollars and contracting practices related to a loan program that helps fund water infrastructure projects.

It is not clear, however, what prompted the audit or what is being examined: Federal officials would not elaborate and city officials could not be reached for comment.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Inspector General announced last week that it had begun auditing the city's use of dollars from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which allows all 50 states to provide low-interest loans for water infrastructure projects with the help of federal grants.

Each individual state operates its own program and must match 20 percent of the federal grants provided by the EPA, according to the agency's website.

In Texas, state officials have \$525 million available in fiscal year 2018 for low-interest loans and principal forgiveness, said Kimberly Friesen Leggett, spokeswoman for the Texas Water Development Board. Entities, such as the city of Houston, can apply to the board for funding at any time.

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As of last week, \$428 million has been committed for 11 projects in the Houston area, Friesen Leggett said. Some of those projects include rehabilitation of wastewater treatment plants and collect systems, as well as emergency flood damage reduction projects, according to documents provided by the board.

More Information

Auditing Houston's use of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund:

More than \$400 million has been committed for 11 funded projects in the Houston area through the fund, which allows all 50 states to provide low-interest loans for water infrastructure projects with the help of grants from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Here are a list of the Houston area projects, as of last week:

1. \$47,195,000 for emergency flood damage reduction projects, Houston
2. \$64,680,000 for collection system rehabilitation 2017, Houston

It's not clear which, if any, of these projects might be of concern to the EPA.

Friesen Leggett would not comment on the audit, but said the agency's Region 6 Water Division annually reviews the board's program.

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3. \$10,635,000 for Lomax area wastewater lift station consolidation, La Porte
4. \$65,750,000 for collection system rehabilitation 2016, Houston
5. \$2,057,442 for sanitary sewer rehabilitation, Sequoia Improvement District
6. \$3,080,000 for wastewater treatment plant projects & sanitary sewer rehabilitation, NW Harris County MUD # 22
7. \$2,460,000 for sanitary sewer repairs, Harris County MUD # 50
8. \$63,435,000 for collection system rehabilitation, Houston
9. \$55,005,000 for collection system rehabilitation 2014, Houston
10. \$65,000,000 for collection system rehabilitation 2013, Houston
11. \$48,750,000 for collection system rehabilitation 2012, Houston

Source: Texas Water Development Board

The division's "most recent review commended the [board] for its management of the program," Friesen Leggett said.

This most recent audit is different from that annual review and Kevin Christensen, the office's assistant inspector general for audit, would not say what prompted it. Audits by the Office of Inspector General can be routine, or based on tips and complaints.

Because this program likely will be used to fund projects after the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey more than two months ago, Christensen said the agency "needs to make sure the funds are going to the right spot."

Officials will be examining if the fund is being properly used, if contracts awarded for the projects are "in compliance with applicable eligibility requirements", and if the city monitors and reports contractors' use of Minority and Women Business Enterprises, according to an office letter

Agency officials will be looking through documentation during their audit, as well as interviewing individuals who are involved with the program, Christensen said.

He did not know when the audit would be completed, but said it would be "a few months down the road."

Alex Stuckey covers science and the environment for the Houston Chronicle. You can reach her at alex.stuckey@chron.com or [Twitter.com/alexdstuckey](https://twitter.com/alexdstuckey).

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'This Is an Emergency': 1 Million African Americans Live Near Oil, Gas Facilities

In some states, 1 in 5 African-American residents lives within a half-mile of an oil or gas production, processing or storage facility, a new study says.

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Richmond, California, home to a Chevron refinery and tank farm, has a predominantly minority population and low-income neighborhoods near petroleum facilities. Credit: Bill Abbott/CC-BY-SA-2.0

A new analysis concludes what many in African-American communities have long experienced: Low-income, black Americans are disproportionately exposed to toxic air pollution from the fossil fuel industry.

More than 1 million African Americans live within a half-mile of oil and natural gas wells, processing, transmission and storage facilities (not including oil refineries), and 6.7 million live in counties with refineries, potentially exposing them to an elevated risk of cancer due to toxic air emissions, according to the study.

When the authors looked at proximity to refineries, they found that about 40 percent of people living in counties with refineries in Michigan, Louisiana and Pennsylvania are African American, and 54 percent in Tennessee are.

In three states—Oklahoma, Ohio and West Virginia—they found that about one in five African-American residents statewide lives within a half-mile of an oil and gas facility, while comprising just 4 to 14 percent of the total population in each state.

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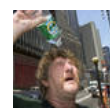
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"We have a real problem with air," said Doris Browne, president of the National Medical Association, a national organization of black physicians and sponsor of the study. "We think it's just a little smog and fog, but we need to worry about the pollutants in the air we're breathing."

The study, *Fumes Across the Fence-Line: The Health Impacts of Air Pollution from Oil and Gas Facilities on African American Communities*, was published Tuesday by the Clean Air Task Force and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Its findings are based on data from the U.S. EPA's National Emissions Inventory and the National Air Toxics Assessment, which look at emissions and health risks on a county-by-county level. The authors applied additional analysis to focus solely on emissions and health impacts attributable to pollution from oil and gas facilities, and then used demographic data to estimate health impacts on African-American communities.

The exposure carries extra health risks, the study says. Among African-American children, the study connects emissions from oil and gas facilities to over 138,000 asthma attacks and over 100,000 missed school days each year. (Approximately 13.4 percent of African-American children nationwide have asthma, compared to 7.3 percent for white children.)

An Issue of Environmental Justice

The exposure to pollutants is tied to deeper systemic issues of oppression and poverty, said Marcus Franklin, program specialist on environmental and climate justice for the NAACP and co-author of the report.

Nationally, the study found, African Americans are 75 percent more likely than Caucasians to live in "fence-line" communities—those next to commercial facilities whose noise, odor, traffic or emissions directly affect the population.



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The Greater Sage-Grouse, which relies on its habitat in the western desert, could be in serious trouble.

Franklin said communities need more choice and control over their energy sources, and a shift away from fossil fuels.

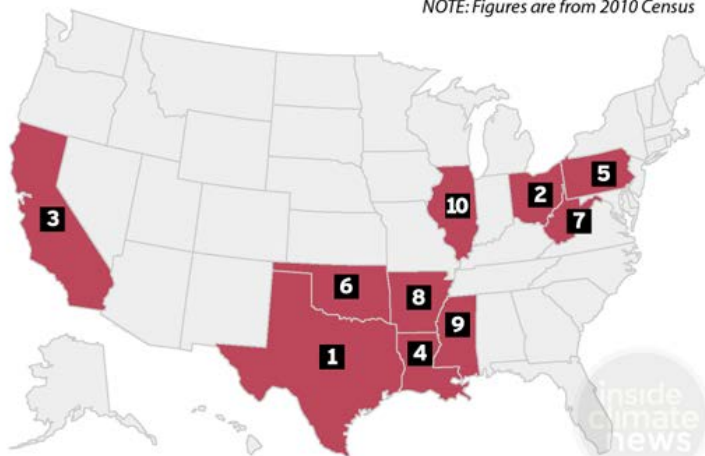
"It is time to shape an energy future that is not exploitative and does not profit from acts of environmental racism," he said.

African Americans' Health in Jeopardy

More than 1 million African Americans live within a half-mile radius of oil and gas facilities. Here are the top 10 states:

	African American population within a half-mile radius	% of African American population in state within a half-mile radius
1 Texas	337,011	10%
2 Ohio	291,733	19%
3 California	103,713	4%
4 Louisiana	79,810	5%
5 Pennsylvania	79,352	5%
6 Oklahoma	73,303	22%
7 West Virginia	13,453	17%
8 Arkansas	10,477	2%
9 Mississippi	10,448	1%
10 Illinois	10,227	1%

NOTE: Figures are from 2010 Census



SOURCE: Clean Air Task Force and NAACP

PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

The Obama administration initiated more stringent regulations of oil and gas facilities designed to safeguard surrounding communities—one set of regulations would cover methane and smog forming pollutants from new and modified sources; another would cover oil and gas facilities on public land—but the Trump administration is now attempting to cancel the additional protections.

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Browne said the report underscores why the Trump administration's plans to roll back environmental protection are especially concerning for African-American communities. "We have a fight on our hands," she said.

Robert Bullard, a professor of urban planning and environmental policy and administration of justice at Texas Southern University who wasn't involved in the study, agreed.

"It's a health problem, it's an environmental problem, it's an education problem because kids are out of school because of asthma attacks and falling behind because they are not in the classroom," he said. "This is an emergency and calls for action to be taken that treats it as an emergency."

Frank Maisano, a spokesman for Bracewell LLP, which represents oil refiners and oil and gas developers, questioned the study's conclusion that expansion of the natural gas supply chain was disproportionately affecting African-American communities. Much of the development in places like Pennsylvania and West Texas has occurred in rural communities with low minority populations, and low populations overall, he said.

Maisano said the study seemed to attribute increased asthma risk wholly to air pollution from oil and gas industry facilities, discounting other important contributors to risk, like socioeconomic factors.

The American Petroleum Institute says methane emissions from the natural gas industry have fallen 18.6 percent even as production increased 50 percent between 1990 and 2015.

"The fracking boom has taken place in rural white areas, for the most part," said Lesley Fleischman, an analyst with Clean Air Task Force and a co-author of the study. "That doesn't negate the fact that there are still 1 million African Americans at risk in proximity to

existing infrastructure, in places like Texas, Louisiana and California."

'You Know You're Being Harmed'

One community highlighted in the report is West Port Arthur, Texas, which is 95 percent African-American and surrounded by several petrochemical plants, including one of the largest oil refineries in the world, owned by Texas-based Valero.

According to the EPA's Toxics Release Inventory, Jefferson County, which includes Port Arthur, is ranked one of the worst counties nationally for chemical emissions known to cause cancer, birth defects and reproductive disorders.

"If you look up into the sky you constantly see smoke stacks spewing brown smoke or whitish smoke into the air," said Hilton Kelley, executive director of Community In-Power & Development Association in Port Arthur. "It's a very ominous kind of view. You know you're being harmed."

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Phil McKenna is a Boston-based reporter for InsideClimate News. Before joining ICN in 2016, he was a freelance writer covering energy and the environment for publications including The New York Times, Smithsonian, Audubon and WIRED. Uprising, a story he wrote about gas leaks under U.S. cities, won the AAAS

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For Some Native Americans, Uranium Contamination Feels Like Discrimination

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Many people who live in the Blue Gap-Tachee Chapter in northeastern Arizona remember when mining companies blasted uranium out of the Claim 28 site near their homes. Dust from mine explosions coated everything.

LAUREL MORALES / KJZZ



(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/shared/npr/styles/x_large/nprshared/201711/562868413.jpg)

Helen Nez, shown with Blue Gap Chapter President Aaron Yazzie, has lost seven of her 10 children to a disorder called Navajo neuropathy, which is linked to uranium contamination.

LAUREL MORALES / KJZZ



(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/shared/npr/styles/x_large/nprshared/201711/562866729.jpg)

This mesa is all that is left of the Claim 28 mine in northeastern Arizona. Scientists say the springs where many people drank have uranium levels at least five times greater than of safe drinking water standards.

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(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/shared/npr/styles/x_large/nprshared/201711/562867239.jpg)

Sadie Bill's cabin sits at the base of Claim 28. She no longer lives there because of concerns about uranium contamination.

LAUREL MORALES / KJZZ



Listen

Originally published on November 14, 2017 10:13 pm

Helen Nez had 10 children. Now she only has three.

Seven of her children died of a disorder called Navajo neuropathy

(<http://www.neurology.org/content/40/2/363.short>), which is linked to uranium contamination.

"Many people died and some have liver disease, kidney disease and some suffer from cancer as a result," Nez said through a translator.

When she was pregnant, Nez and her children drank from a spring, located on Navajo Nation in northeastern Arizona, with uranium levels at least five times greater than safe drinking water standards, according to a study (<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/acs.est.5b01408>) published in the journal

Environmental Science & Technology in 2015.

Four of her children died as toddlers. Three died in early adulthood. Their stomachs became bloated, and their eyes turned a cloudy gray. The three remaining children, now adults, have health problems.

"It is worrisome and troublesome, and you hope that something will be done," Nez said.

In a new poll by NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, more than 1 in 4 Native Americans say the quality of their drinking water is worse than in other places.

From 1944 to 1986, mining companies blasted 30 million tons of uranium out of Navajo land. When the U.S. Energy Department had stockpiled enough for the Cold War, the companies left, abandoning 521 mines. Since then, many Navajo have died of conditions linked to contamination (<https://www.epa.gov/navajo-nation-uranium-cleanup>).

Nez's sister Sadie Bill drives out to an abandoned uranium mine called Claim 28. Along the way, she points to the site of her neighbor's home that was so contaminated it had to be hauled away (<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/04/10/473547227/for-the-navajo-nation-uranium-minings-deadly-legacy-lingers>).

"She passed on about 2 1/2 years ago," Bill said. "And this one over here, she was on dialysis. And she passed on, oh, eight, nine months ago."

We drive by four more homes where people have died.

"People on the outside world say, 'What's wrong with you? Get out of there. Move!' " said Chris Shuey, the director of uranium impact assessment at Southwest Research and Information Center. "That's not economically or culturally feasible. People have been captive to these exposures now for three generations."

Shuey, an environmental health scientist, has been studying the impacts of uranium mining on the Navajo people for almost four decades. He points out that Navajos are connected by tradition to the land. When a Navajo baby is born, the umbilical cord is buried in the ground, tying them to that place forever.

The community and many others like it want to know why it's taking the federal government so long (<https://www.epa.gov/navajo-nation-uranium-cleanup>) to clean up the abandoned mines.

In the NPR poll, 39 percent of Native Americans say discrimination based in laws and government policies is a bigger problem than discrimination based on individuals' prejudice.

"The slow pace of cleanup is directly related to the law, itself," Shuey said. "The law places more importance on the relationship between EPA and the companies that caused the problem than it creates a right of sitting at the table of the local affected community. And so on Navajo, that is institutional racism."

In this case, Shuey said the policies of the Energy Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and the tribe have hurt the Navajo people.

Of the 521 abandoned mines, the EPA has only cleaned up nine so far. And Shuey says cleanup presents a lot of challenges.

"There's not a lot of places to take this stuff to," Shuey said. "You invariably put it in somebody else's backyard."

The EPA said in a statement that the federal government has reached settlements valued at \$1.7 billion with mining companies — enough to clean up about 40 percent of the abandoned mines.

"The EPA is really caught between a rock and a hard place," said University of New Mexico toxicologist Matt Campen, who is studying the air quality surrounding abandoned mines. "They get attacked by both advocacy groups for not doing enough and by industry for doing too much."

Campen said it comes down to allocation of resources and authority to get things done. A Navajo group is currently evaluating the cost to remediate the mine near Helen Nez and her sister Sadie Bill's home.

"We lost too many people," Bill said. "We don't want our future young people to have to go through this again."

At the current rate, it would take multiple generations for the Navajo to be free of uranium contamination. For this family and for many others though, it's already too late.

Our ongoing series (<http://www.npr.org/series/559149737/you-me-and-them-experiencing-discrimination-in-america>), "You, Me and Them: Experiencing Discrimination in America" is based in part on a poll (<https://www.npr.org/documents/2017/nov/NPR-discrimination-native-americans-final.pdf>) by NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. We have previously released results for African-Americans, Latinos and whites so far. In coming weeks, we will release results for LGBTQ adults, Asian-Americans and women.

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ELISE HU, HOST:

Native Americans say a major problem they face is institutional discrimination. That's a finding of a new poll by NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. In Indian country, they call it environmental racism. During World War II and the Cold War, mining

companies blasted 30 million tons of uranium out of Navajo land. Since then, many residents have died of conditions linked to that contamination. Laurel Morales of member station KJZZ reports from Blue Gap, Ariz.

LAUREL MORALES, BYLINE: Helen Nez had 10 children. Now she only has three. Seven of her children died of a disorder called Navajo neuropathy, which is linked to uranium contamination.

HELEN NEZ: (Through interpreter) Many people died, and some have liver disease, kidney disease. And some suffer from cancer as a result.

MORALES: When she was pregnant, Nez and her children drank from a spring that today has uranium levels at least five times that of safe drinking water standards. Four of her children died as toddlers. Three died in early adulthood.

NEZ: (Through interpreter) It is worrisome and troublesome, and you hope that something will be done.

MORALES: In the new NPR poll, more than 1 in 4 Native Americans say the quality of their drinking water is worse than in other places to live. Nez's sister, Sadie Bill, drives out to an abandoned uranium mine near the spring called Claim 28. Along the way, she points to the site of her neighbor's home that had to be hauled away; it was so contaminated.

SADIE BILL: So she passed on about two and a half years ago. And this one over here - she was on dialysis, and she passed on, oh, eight to nine months ago.

CHRIS SHUEY: People on the outside world then said, well, what's wrong with you? Get out of there. Move. That's not economically or culturally feasible.

MORALES: Chris Shuey is an environmental health scientist who's been studying the impacts of uranium mining on the Navajo people for almost four decades. He points out Navajos are tied by tradition to the land where they're born.

SHUEY: People have been captive to these exposures now for three generations.

MORALES: The community and many others like it want to know why it's taking the federal government so long to clean up the abandoned mines. In the NPR poll, 39 percent of Native Americans say discrimination based in laws and government policies is a bigger problem than discrimination based on individuals' prejudice.

SHUEY: The slow pace of cleanup is directly related to the law itself. The law places more importance on the relationship between EPA and the companies that caused the problem than it creates a right of sitting at the table of the local affected community. And so on Navajo, that is institutional racism.

MORALES: In this case, Shuey says the policies of the Energy Department, the EPA and the tribe have hurt the Navajo people. Of the 500 abandoned mines, the EPA has only cleaned up nine so far. And Shuey says cleanup presents a lot of challenges.

SHUEY: There's not a lot of places to take this stuff to. You invariably put it in somebody else's backyard.

MORALES: The EPA wouldn't make anyone available for an interview, but it said in a statement, the federal government has reached settlements valued at \$1.7 billion with mining companies, enough to clean up about 40 percent of the abandoned mines.

MATT CAMPEN: The EPA is really caught between a rock and a hard place.

MORALES: University of New Mexico toxicologist Matt Campen is studying the air quality surrounding abandoned mines.

CAMPEN: They get attacked by both advocacy groups for not doing enough and by industry for doing too much.

MORALES: Campen says it comes down to allocation of resources and authority to get things done. A Navajo group is currently evaluating the cost to remediate the mine near Helen Nez and her sister Sadie Bill's home.

BILL: We lost too many people. We don't want our future young people to have to go through this again.

MORALES: At the current rate, it would take multiple generations for the Navajo to be free of uranium contamination.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

KELLY MCEVERS, HOST:

That was reporter Laurel Morales.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC) Transcript provided by NPR, Copyright NPR.



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Newkirk citizens plan meeting to oppose biochemical testing nearby

POSTED 10:29 PM, NOVEMBER 14, 2017, BY CASSANDRA SWEETMAN

Protesting biochemical testing



NEWKIRK, Okla. - Concerns over chemical testing have a community banding together in opposition. Meetings planned are just part of the protest against the upcoming testing at the Chilocco Indian School.

The Department of Homeland Security announced it would be conducting biochemical warfare testing at the closed school next year. Testing months include January and February, then again in June and July.

According to a published 58-page assessment of the testing, researchers will be releasing inert chemicals into the air and measuring how much of them penetrate the buildings on site.

The assessment states some of the chemicals listed are nontoxic and nonhazardous.

The bio-insecticide "Dipel" is "not considered a hazard by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) when handled appropriately."

But, not everyone is convinced the testing will be harmless.

"Too many crops, too many cattle are out there that it can affect," said Vicky Frank, who grew up at the Chilocco Indian School while it was open. "I want to save the Earth, I want to save the school, the school that I was raised in."

Residents in Newkirk, less than a couple of miles from the site, are also sharing doubts about the testing.

"Whenever you hear somebody say, we're going to be testing chemicals just miles from your home, miles from where you grow livestock, it's scary," said Brittney Smith.

She insists the dense 58-page report is too much to make sense of unless you're versed in the science discussed.

Some of the details, like the researchers' safety gear, are worrying to her.

"They will be having to wear Hazmat suits and respirators in the area that they're testing these chemicals," Smith said.

She and others also worried about the harmful affects of the areas wildlife, insisting some of the species who could be affected, like bald eagles, are not listed as such in the assessment.

"It can't be completely harmless," Smith said. "It can't be completely nontoxic."

With emails to the DHS going unanswered, and no one in Newkirk or the surrounding areas to address concerns, a meeting is planned to get all those with questions in one room.

"We need to come up with a list of concerns as a community," Smith said. "We also need to decide where we're going to go from here. How are we going to react? What are we wanting from Homeland Security?"

The meeting is planned for November 15 at 6 p.m. at the Johnny Ray McCauley Gymnasium next door to the Kanza Wellness Center.

There is also a meeting scheduled for November 16 at 6 p.m. at the Arkansas City, Kansas Senior Center.

News 4 reached out to the Department of Homeland Security and have not yet heard back.





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Louisiana's Share Of The Exxon Settlement

By [SUE LINCOLN \(/PEOPLE/SUE-LINCOLN\)](/PEOPLE/SUE-LINCOLN) • 6 HOURS AGO



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(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wrkf/files/styles/x_large/public/201711/exxon_flares.jpg)

The public comment period on the EPA settlement with Exxon is now open. The agreement involves reducing air pollutants at eight Exxon facilities — five in Texas and three in Baton Rouge.

"The company has agreed to install what we call 'flare gas recovery systems,'" the EPA's Patrick Foley explains. "These requirements will cost about \$300 million to implement, but they'll have significant reductions in air pollutants."



Listen

2:00

Foley says the improvements will keep 7,000 tons of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and 1,500 tons of other pollutants from being released into Texas and Louisiana air each year.

The settlement includes some Louisiana-specific penalties.

"The company will also pay a civil fine of \$2.5 million, with \$470,000 of that going to the state of Louisiana. They'll also pay a \$2.5-million amount to undertake supplemental environmental projects," Foley says.

Louisiana DEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown says the settlement terms are providing a much-needed tool for keeping track of hazardous emissions.

"Our portion of that settlement is actually geared towards a beneficial environmental project, which includes the purchase of a mobile air monitoring lab," Brown states.

The lab is a van, equipped with sampling devices, spectrographic analysis equipment and computers that can calculate what's in the air, water or soil — on the spot. Carr says as soon as the settlement is finalized, DEQ will move forward on purchasing the lab.

"We've earmarked about \$1.4 million for that particular lab," says Carr. "We've developed the specs, and a bid should be going out relatively soon." He adds, "We actually expect to have that lab on site here in Louisiana by early second quarter of 2018 — the April-May timeframe of next year."

The EPA is taking public comments until Dec. 7, while DEQ's public comment period runs until Dec. 22.

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DEC 29, 2016 

LOUISIANA ENVIRONMENT AND FLOOD CONTROL

Marsh loss turning native Louisiana ducks into common mallards

Updated 5:24 AM;

Posted Nov 14, 1:30 PM



Mottled ducks face habitat loss across the Gulf coast region. Photo courtesy of Tom Friedel.

By Tristan Baurick, tbaurick@nola.com,

NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

The mottled duck is looking for love in all the wrong places.

As its breeding grounds disappear along the Louisiana coast, the mottled duck -- the only duck native to the marshes of the American South -- is finding mates farther inland, in urban drainage and park ponds, ditches and farm fields. Problem is, that's increasingly the territory of the mallard, the most common and widespread duck in the world.

Pushed together by the coast's land loss crisis, the two closely-related species are interbreeding, resulting in a hybrid that will eventually look and act more like the dominant mallard and less like the mottled duck.

"It's a unique species to the Gulf coast, separated (from other species) over millions of years of evolution," said waterfowl biologist Robert Ford, referring to the mottled duck. "Whereas, the mallard is ubiquitous. It's invading the whole United States."

Ford is the lead author of a new Louisiana State University study that links the loss of coastal habitat with a rise in mallard crossbreeding. His research, published in the journal Condor: Ornithological Applications, draws from the genetic testing of more than 400 ducks. Only about 5 to 8 percent showed hybridization, but that number is expected to rise as Gulf marshes recede, Ford said.

Louisiana's coast is disappearing at a rate of a football field every 100 minutes, according to calculations by the U.S. Geological Survey. Over the past 80 years, the state has lost about 2,000 square miles of coastal wetland due to several factors, including erosion from oil and gas canals, natural subsidence, hurricanes and the construction of Mississippi River levees, which prevent land-building sediment and nutrients from reaching swamps and marshes.

Mottled ducks evolved to fill a niche in the Gulf coast ecosystem. They don't migrate, staying put year-round in pairs or small groups. Unlike male mallards, which have iridescent green heads, male mottled ducks look nearly identical to their female counterparts.

Louisiana Audubon lists the bird as a "species of concern," mostly due to the rapid loss of habitat.

"It had a small population size to begin with," said Erik Johnson, Audubon Louisiana's director of bird conservation. "And now there's probably less than 100,000 of the species. The mallard, in contrast, has millions and millions and millions."

Hunters are having little impact on the mottled duck, Johnson said. That may be partly due to the fact they're hard to shoot. Ellis Guilbeau, chairman of the Louisiana chapter of Ducks Unlimited, said mottled ducks are more wary of hunters. They also know how to hide in the marsh better than migratory ducks.

"The migratory birds don't know what to do," he said. "They're all over the place."

Mallards typically steer clear of the Gulf's coastal marshes. When mallards do overlap into mottled duck territory, their out-of-synch mating habits usually inhibit crossbreeding. Mottled ducks are paired up with their own species by the time migratory mallards drop by in late November. But it's not the migratory mallards that are the biggest concern. The mallard that mottled ducks are more likely to encounter in inland ponds are the domesticated variety. Reared on farms, these mallards don't have the will to migrate, and can easily synch with the mottled duck's breeding cycle.

Thousands have gone "feral" after release or escape from farms and hunting reserves.

In Florida, about 12,000 domesticated mallards have been released each year since the early 1990s, according to Ford. Louisiana has at least two hunting reserves that release farm-raised mallards for hunters to shoot.

"But not all of them get shot," Ford said.

Feral mallards have become year-round residents in the inland areas that are now also a place of refuge for mottled ducks fleeing the eroding coast.

Mallards apparently give them warm welcome.

"They're a very promiscuous species," Johnson said. "They interbreed with a lot of things."

Mallards are flooding the gene pools of other localized breeds in the U.S. The American black duck of the north Atlantic states and the Mexican duck of the American

southwest are hybridizing with the mallard. In some cases, the mallard has bred other species out of existence. New Zealand's Pacific black duck "was most likely eliminated" by mallard crossbreeding, according to Ford.

"If this continues, there'll be just one super species," Ford said.

*Tristan Baurick covers Louisiana's coastal environment for NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune. Email: tbaurick@nola.com * Twitter: [@tristanbaurick](https://twitter.com/tristanbaurick) * Facebook: [Tristan Baurick](#) and [Louisiana Coastal Watch](#).*

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Millions needed to replace rusty, corroded, clogged lines

By Melinda Stotts | mstotts@miaminewsrecord.com

Posted Nov 14, 2017 at 9:37 AM

Miami water, sewer plan researched to address aged infrastructure long in need of replacement and repair.

MIAMI – Corroded, clogged and rusted sewer and water pipes, some placed in service 100 years ago in Miami, are long in need of replacement and repair. A detailed and in-depth search by the Public Utility Department staff investigating alternative funding opportunities through state and other entities was presented at the last Miami City Council and Miami Special Utility Authority meeting, as well as a much-needed capital improvement plan for the undertaking.

“It won’t get any better,” Miami City Manager Dean Kruithof said. “This is something we absolutely have to do because they will not fix themselves.”

The MSUA requested the report as well as a focused look at the most immediate infrastructure needs and estimated costs back in May as a plan was being developed.

The plan included a list of water and sewer lines that would be replaced or repaired with a \$9 million bond.

The bond along with the capital outlay items such as the City’s Electric Utility infrastructure improvement plans were used in Wildans Financial Services, a public finance consultant, rate study presentation by Vice President Dan Jackson to determine rates for the coming years for the City of Miami.

Miami Director of Public Utilities Tyler Cline and Olsson Associates Shaun McConnaughey went over several options looking into an effort to find free money resources and loan programs.

City staff met with the Oklahoma Water Resource Board (OWRB) and Indian Health Services, and USDA for drinking water and found no funds for replacing existing lines in the community, and for sewer, the City of Miami did not meet any funding requirements.

OWRB FAP Loans, rates and terms were researched with no reserve and with no environmental requirements. EPA backed Clean Water State Revolving Fund loans were looked at for wastewater and stormwater projects, and these loans do not accrue interest until money is actually drawn and are cheaper than FAP, shaving off 40 percent of the interest rate, but then adding 0.5 percent to the final rate to cover costs and requiring environmental review.

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loans offer a similar discount and is co-managed with DEQ. The MSUA and staff will be weighing the pluses and negatives of each possibility to determine which course is best for Miami's necessary infrastructure capital improvement plan.

The department forecast for the proposed City of Miami needed infrastructure improvements is calling for \$9 million in bonding in 2018, and \$6 million in bonding in 2020 and again in 2022.

Kruithof said there are first state funding opportunities to look at before borrowing such a large amount of money for the top priority projects, and in turn rate increases could also be delayed or much smaller.

"There's some very real opportunities with that," he said.

A rate study was conducted to determine what rate increases would be passed on to utility customers to fund the necessary infrastructure improvements.

"We could do these projects in the same amount of time but not have as big an impact on our customers," Kruithof said.

Mayor Rudy Schultz thanked the staff for the research and presentation.

Cline pointed out the list is subject to changes with economic development or future growth. He said besides the listed projects, utility crews would continue to replace five to 10 blocks of waterlines a year within the yearly

budget using boring equipment.

The waterline capital improvement plan presented lays out the specific line, present material, length, current size, replacement size and cost for each project.

“We brought in some interesting waterlines, this is the two-inch water main that we removed, and you can see all the sediment inside of it,” Cline said, holding up an old rusted piece of waterline he said he estimates around 100 years old. “You can see all the sediment inside, this is what it stirred up when we flushed the hydrants.”

Cline presented photos of hydrant flushing showing heavily brown and rust colored water flowing from the lines, indicating the obvious need of repair or replacement.

The plan presented listed 14 projects, major feeder lines, at an estimate of \$7,403,000, starting with waterline replacement from Central from H Street NW to Elm Street.

McConnaughey said the list of estimates might be more, but if good bid prices come in the goal is to move forward using what money is available.

“Don’t think that once we get through the first 14, we’re through. There’s a lot more to get through, and these are just immediate priorities,” he said, displaying a map of the projects.

The sewer capital improvement project plan included 10 projects, mostly along the Neosho River, listed at an estimated cost of \$3,409,000 for slip lining.

“The ones we picked here are low lying areas where basic infiltration is a little more likely to get in the line,” McConnaughey said.

During the last few weeks, the Miami Fire Department and Utility Department workers have been flushing hydrants and lines. Kruithof explained the flushing not only cleans out the line but helps to prioritize waterline pressure improvement projects.

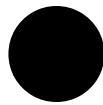
“About 40 percent of our ISO rating is dependent on our water supply system,” Kruithof said.

Kruithof said the proposed projects would help improve water and sewer service and will also help improve ISO ratings and firefighting ability within Miami.

The next steps in the plan are to seek funding and to bring the recommendations back to the MSUA in January or later for approval and may be up to a year before any progress begins.

Melinda Stotts is the associate editor of the Miami News-Record. She can be emailed at _____ or followed on Twitter

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Residents worry trees could fall victim to bayou flood control efforts

By **Mihir Zaveri** | November 14, 2017 | Updated: November 14, 2017 9:07pm

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Photo: Gary Coronado, Staff

A man throws a cast net into the Buffalo Bayou with the Barker Dam and Barker Reservoir in the background. The Barker Reservoir and Barker Dam in conjunction with the Addicks Reservoir help to prevent downstream flooding of Buffalo Bayou in the city of Houston. (Gary Coronado / Houston Chronicle)

A Harris County study to reduce flooding along Buffalo Bayou between Texas 6 and Beltway 8 is drawing fire from local groups who say flood control improvements could destroy forests there.

Commissioners Court on Tuesday voted unanimously to let the Harris County Flood Control District sketch out what exactly a study of that segment of the bayou would examine.

The Court would have to vote again to green light the actual study, which could recommend flood reduction measures, such as clearing trees and installing detention ponds.

Susan Chadwick, executive director of the nonprofit Save Buffalo Bayou, opposed the flood control district's study, stating that residents in the area had been fighting for years to keep the forests' natural aesthetic.

"It's not worth the loss of public treasure," Chadwick told commissioners Tuesday. "Trees do not cause flooding of homes."

Chadwick is among a number of residents in the area who say that the trees help improve water quality, slow rainwater runoff and maintain a more appealing natural aesthetic. Proponents note that for flood-weary residents along Buffalo Bayou, many who just took on several feet of water during Hurricane Harvey, holding back floodwaters while also streamlining portions of the channel is paramount.

The back-and-forth is the latest in a long-standing tension over the look and feel of

TRANSLATOR

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HOUSTON POLITICS & POLICY



Residents worry trees could fall victim to bayou flood control



Green's retirement means Houston could send first Latino to

Houston's bayous. Terry Hershey and other Houston conservationists led a famous and successful push in the 1960s to prevent the straightening of Buffalo Bayou, a move that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has said constrained the ability of the bayou to handle floodwaters released from the Addicks and Barker dams.

Earlier this year, the flood control district was granted a permit from the Army Corps to redesign a portion of Buffalo Bayou near Memorial Park to show that stabilization of banks, erosion repair, improved water quality, sediment reduction and preservation of the bayou's flood capacity is possible through "natural channel design," a term that describes engineering to a stream that mimics natural changes.

That project also was opposed by conservationists who criticized that alteration of the natural landscape.

"You see this frequently, figuring out if you leave a system natural, or do you make them pipes," said Larry Larson, senior policy analyst with the association of state flood plain managers.

Larson said similar conversations are happening around the country as cities look to reverse a mid-20th century push to line waterways with concrete.

Regarding the flood control district's current look at Buffalo Bayou between Texas 6 and Beltway 8, Executive Director Russ Poppe said the district owns right of way averaging about 500 to 600 feet outside the bayou's banks in that stretch, opening up the possibility to add stormwater detention there. The land was purchased from the Army Corps in the 1960s.

"Those improvements do make a benefit," Poppe said.

The flood control district does not own the right of way downstream of Beltway 8. Addicks and Barker dams are upstream of Texas 6.

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Flood control plan for stretch of Buffalo Bayou could result in



Crowded field emerges to vie for U.S. Rep. Gene Green's seat



The flood control district also is conducting another study of vegetation along that stretch of the bayou to classify the plants and trees. Removing invasive species could have environmental benefits, Poppe said.

The timing of potential projects on Buffalo Bayou is unclear. Recommendations could come before Commissioners Court in a few months. Poppe said Tuesday's vote allows the flood control district to negotiate with consultant R.G. Miller Engineers over the scope of the Buffalo Bayou study, and once that is complete, began analyzing information from the vegetation study to recommend any changes.

Poppe said "absolutely there would be opportunity for public involvement," citing future votes on potential projects.

He said the city also is considering drainage improvements along Buffalo Bayou, which could impact how much water that drains out of neighborhoods and into the waterway. That could necessitate more detention or other improvements.

Steve Costello, the city's chief resilience officer, who frequently is referred to as Houston's "flood czar," could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

**Mihir Zaveri**

Reporter

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